

4. THE COMMISSION RECOMMENDS THAT THE FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION NOT GRANT ANY FURTHER EXTENSIONS OF TIME FOR AMTRAK TO CONSTRUCT THE SIDINGS AT GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT ON THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR, WHICH SIDINGS WERE MANDATED BY FRA'S RECORD OF DECISION ON THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT. WITH AMTRAK'S INCREASED FREQUENCY OF SERVICE AND SPEED OF TRAINS ON THE CORRIDOR, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THESE SIDINGS HAS BECOME ESSENTIAL TO UNIMPEDED COMMUTER SERVICE BY CONNECTICUT'S SHORE LINE EAST AND SAFE FREIGHT OPERATIONS BY PROVIDENCE & WORCESTER RAILROAD.

The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Record of Decision on the Northeast Corridor Electrification project mandated the construction of sidings at various locations along the Corridor to mitigate impacts to other Corridor users. Most of the sidings, including Guilford, were stipulated for construction A prior to the initiation of Amtrak service at speeds greater than those presently operated. At the time of the Record of Decision (ROD), this was projected to be October 1999.

Subsequently, and in view of the slippage of the initiation date for Amtrak high speed service, Amtrak requested a delay for the construction of the Guilford siding to June 20, 2001. After consulting with the Providence and Worcester Railroad (P&W) and ConnDOT, FRA did not object to this request.

During most of 2000, Amtrak purported to be on schedule for construction of the Guilford siding, reporting that procurement of needed materials was in process. However, Amtrak has now requested a second delay in the deadline for installation of this siding, citing funding constraints.

Further delays in the installation of the Guilford siding are of more than theoretical or policy concern. Stringline diagrams submitted to date by Amtrak are not sufficiently detailed to demonstrate that adequate operating windows will be available for operation of all Shore Line East commuter and Providence & Worcester freight service once Amtrak's expanded service is fully in place. Proposed plans for Shore Line East expansion in fall of 2001 will only exacerbate schedule tightness and conflicts. The same is true as P&W freight volumes continue to grow.

More specific problems will occur if the Guilford sidings are not in place by 2002 when a new Guilford Shore Line East station is slated for construction. It is currently proposed to be located to serve the south siding rather than the main line track. Failure to have the siding in place will result in a stranded station, with the need for a temporary platform to reach the trains. If the new station and platform were located to serve the main line track directly, it would need to be relocated when the siding is installed, obviously a situation to be avoided.

For freight service, availability of the Guilford sidings allows P&W the flexibility to use smaller windows in the Amtrak schedule to deadhead trains from New Haven to Old Saybrook. Guilford can be reached in 25 minutes from New Haven. Freight trains could then wait at Guilford for Amtrak trains to clear, then proceed to Old Saybrook. In the absence of the sidings, a full 40 minute window is necessary to safely transit to Old Saybrook. If this window is missed due to any deliveries taking longer than anticipated, then P&W must wait a full hour for another window. This could put them in violation of the FRA's 12-hour crew limit, making them unable to complete the run in one shift and necessitating a new crew being sent to complete the run. This is very expensive and inefficient.

To date, Amtrak has been very cooperative in setting their schedules to provide sufficient operating windows for Shore Line East and P&W operations. However, with increasing service by all three corridor users, this will become progressively more difficult. With Amtrak having scheduling priority on the Corridor, at some point other users will be forced to make compromises in their service and will lose customers or riders. The Guilford sidings will provide all users with the operating flexibility to avoid these conflicts.

If Amtrak is not required to construct these sidings without further delay, there is also a fear among other Corridor users that they may never get constructed. Once high speed Acela service is underway, Amtrak's needs are met, and it becomes increasingly difficult to secure completion of mitigation measures such as the Guilford sidings. With Providence and Worcester's freight volumes growing and with Shore Line East looking at possible increases in commuter service, the operating flexibility provided by the Guilford sidings becomes increasingly essential. Without it, only Amtrak's needs among Corridor users are met, while other commuter and freight needs are constrained, inevitably resulting in these unmet travel demands moving from the rail line to Interstate 95, US-1 and other roads in the region.